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STUDY OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN INDEPENDENT RURAL INDIA : Critical Issues for Analyses of Fourth Decade

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Study of Social Change in Independent Rural India :

Critical Issues for Analyses of Fourth Decade*

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As the Indian freedom movement was being waged under the amorphous umbrella of the Indian National Congress displaying the hetrogenous background and character of the ideologies of the main actors involved in the drama, it was more or less assumed that independence was going to be bestowed on the Indians sooner or later. An elitist diagnosis of the ills which afflicted the Indian society in general and its villages in particular had also emerged indicating the lines on which reconstruction of the Indian society was to have begun once the major task of winning the independence was accomplished (Desai : 1958; Misra : 1975; Ensminger : 1974).

While the entire leadership had made a public pledge of making an organized attempt to change the face of villages in independent India, some experimentation in rural development and reconstruction work had continued, spread over a span of many decades, in varied forms, in isolated, localized pockets.1/ Even otherwise, the British and before them the Moghuls had tinkered with the socio-economic-political-cultural ethos of the Indian villages rather drastically. Thus, even-though the community development programme, introduced in 1952, was the first large scale rural development programme which was expected to bring changes on the rural scene, the villages had been undergoing changes because of internal impulses and external stimuli all along. Only their intensity had increased and the direction and sweep assumed different dimensions in the post independence period.

Analysis of social change in rural India has been - and continues to be - a favourite area for the social scientists, Indian and foreign, of different disciplinary moorings and even wider ideological orientations. That their analyses have added to the domains of knowledge of different disciplines is not contested. In the analysis which follows, it would be instructive to examine their claim of objectivity, analytical rigour, conceptual clarity, comprehensiveness of

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sweep, selection of data, interpretative neutrality, and prescriptive appropriateness. For, it is now being grudgingly acknowledged that quite a few of such exercises by Western scholars suffer from ethnocentricity, a slanted methodology, a purposeful selection of data, a strong tendency toward authoritarianism, an interpretative bias in favour of Western values, institutions and practices, and a conscious attempt to run down things Asian, and Indian (Goonatillake : 1978; Gupta : 1973). Indians themselves are open to pretty stringent criticism because of prevalent public ideology, dominance of the Western tradition and narrow social background of the social scientists (Saberwal : 1979). The depiction of the empirical reality has, thus, been less than satisfactory.

Apart from the lack of political vision on the part of political leadership, systemic insulation, enertia and lack of imagination on the part of bureaucracy, policy planning, programme designing, system operation, monitoring and evaluation of rural development programmes have also suffered because of misleading and false analyses of social change in rural India by the social scientists. This paper would consider a few issues which are crucial to the analysis of social change in rural India in the fourth decade of the post-independence period. Discussion of the issues would be made through a review of the relevant literature on the subject.2/ It is different from earlier reviews on caste (Beteille, et al : 1958; Damle : 1961; Surajit Sinha : 1973; Sheth : 1979), Community Development and Panchayati Raj (Haldipur : 1974), cooperation (Mahabal, et al : 1975), administration of development programmes in agriculture and community development (Gaikwad : 1975), agricultural labour (Vyas and Shivamaggi : 1975), land reforms (Joshi : 1975), scheduled castes (Sachchidananda : 1973), concepts and theories of change (Yogendra Singh : 1973a) and rural studies (Chauhan : 1973) in as much as it does not generally highlight the findings : it is, on the other hand, dealing with the very motivations,conceptualizations, mechanics, methodologies, prescriptions and contributions, issues which make it clear, when juxtaposed to the findings,whether the conduct of studies had been a reliable, objective and useful exercise for its potential beneficiaries.

Study of Change : Value Neutrality

Social change is a very complex, multifaced, and multidimensional phenomenon. The task of social scientists is to understand first its meaning and content before describing,

for the benefit of the academics, policy planners and administrators, its nature, direction, causes, quantum, adequacy and consequences. Although it is not unusual to find studies of social change bereft of any theoretical/conceptual framework, the fact remains that conceptual clarity is basic prerequisite for any sound and penetrative analysis. Process of change has generally been described with a certain ideological slant although most social scientists do not make their ideological orientation very explict in their expositions. It is our contention that various traditions of studies, while professing a pseudo value-neutrality, have offered a lopsided rendering of empirical reality. These traditions are rooted in the West, and Brahminical view-point of Indian society and have Weberian and neo-Weberian sub-streams. They analyse changes in the Indian society in terms of Christianity's irrationality, occurance of evolutionary modernity only under the benevolent impact of the West, assess 'modernization' on the criteria laid down by an already modern Western society (Arora : 1968; Gupta : 1974), and conformation and deviance from the prescriptions and proscriptions contained in the ancient texts.

It is essential to give specific examples to show that these portrayals are basically inaccurate, and misleading since they ignore culturally relevant changes within the Indian tradition before the advent of exeternal stimuli, and operation of the indegenous processes fostering modernization.

Major theoretical framework for these biased analyses of social change was provided by Max Weber (1930) where the ideal characteristic was located in the 'modernized' West (Protestent ethic and rationality) and its bipolar one found in the 'traditional' countries. Weber's schema was followed by Durkheim (1933 : mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity), Toennies (1940, 1955 : Gemeinschaft and Gasellachaft), Becker (1957 : sacred and secular), Redfield (1955 : folk and urban), Parsons (1951 : pattern variables), Lerner (1964 : traditional and modern), Merton (1961 : local and cosmopolitan), Riesman (1961 : tradition directed and other directed) and Rostow (1961, 1971 : traditional and mass consumption societies).3/

What emerges from the accounts of these scholars is unimpeachable and clear preference for Western values (such as efficiency, diligence, orderliness, punctuality, decisiveness, rationality, participation, protestent ethic, materialism, independence)

and Western institutions (such as nuclear family, democracy, civic culture). Asian and Indian values (such as abstention, spiritualism, frugality, appreciation of leisure, tolerance and nonviolence, and inherited respect for learning) and institutions (such as caste, religion, and joint family) easily and conveniently get portrayed as symptoms of backwardness and hindrance to entrepreneurship, development and modernization.

In the enthusiasm to some how fit the 'data' to these hackneyed and biased theoretical descriptions, historical evidence from both the Western (industrial/urban) and Asian/Indian societies and their sub-cultures was conveniently ignored. It would be interesting to note what this tendency contributed to the emergence of particular conclusions via the studies pertaining to industrial/urban and agricultural/rural sectors. Documentation of such results pertaining to the industrial/urban sector could be seen elsewhere (Verma : 1979, a, b) : in this piece we concentrate only on the Indian agricultural/rural sector.

Because of peculiar tradition of evolution of social sciences in India, there has been excessive concern with religion, caste, tribe, and family as system isolates. As a result, the relationship of these isolates with the issues such as class formation, class composition, intra and inter-class relations has been generally analyzed less regorously. Wherever, these have been examined at all, the two (or more) sets have been seen as two or more separate sub-systems and the analysis has tended to focus their match/mismatch (Bailey : 1957, 1963, 1973; Beteille : 1965, 1968; D'Souza : 1967, 1969, 1978). Very rarely has the class structure of the village been taken first and the role of the systemic isolates analyzed in class formation and struggle (Shivkumar : 1978). Thus, it comes as no surprise when a Srinivas tends to be generally and excessively preoccupied with phenomenon religious and ritual (1952, 1960, 1962, 1965, 1976) and does not adequately explore the other aspects of social change; a Milton Singer who is hung on the relationship of the "little" and "great" traditions (1956, 1961, 1966, a, 1972, 1975), a Mandelbaum who finds change in the Indian society but very little change in its structure (1970); and a Yogendra Singh who makes Western stimuli necessary prerequisit of any structural changes in the Indian society (1973). There are a large number of other, smaller, less known treatises which start with value-biases and predictably reach biased conclusions.

Nature, Quantum and Adequacy of Change : Measurement Miasma

Measurement of change is a tough task to which very few researchers have addressed themselves adequately. In fact, there is hardly any agreement about the meaning of as widely used terms as 'development' and 'modernization'.4/ There is one group of researchers, mainly among sociologists and psychologists, who have worked out what they call 'overall-modernity' scales (Inkles and Smith : 1975; Broehl : 1978) or other 'parsimonious modernity scales' (Fliegel, et al : 1968; Roy, et al : 1968, 1969). Construction of these indices/scales has been a very controversial area even on methodological grounds (Fliegel : 1976; McClleland : 1976) : there is even fiercier objection on the basis of value - preferences. These scales generally include a wide array of items from different areas of human conduct and assign variable scores for acceptance/non-acceptance of new ideas/ innovations/technologies. In this cock-eyed scoring system, acceptance of any new thing (idea, product, gadget, technology, procedure, etc.) becomes without any rhyme or reason an attribute of modernity. It is conveniently forgotton that many of the new ideas , whose acceptance has been considered an indication of modernity, have been subsequently proved to be hardly scientific and modern: claims of some of these have turned out to be highly exaggerated whereas certain others have emerged as fakes. A certain amount of reliance on one's own experience with these new things before their 'adoption' is in fact a more modern attribute and yet, this healthy sense of skepticism gets dubbed as sign of backwardness.

A second group of scholars - mostly anthropologists - have given qualitative lables to different types of changes. Change in rural India has, for example, been seen as 'recurrent' and 'systemic' (Mandelbaum : 1970), 'national and global-oriented' (Ishwaran : 1970), 'linear, evolutionary and cyclical' (Yogendra Singh : 1973), 'dynamics' and 'change' (Radcliff - Brown : 1957), 'casual fluctuations' and 'replacebility' (R.K. Mukherjee : 1975), and 'accumulative', 'alterative' and 'transformative' (P.N. Mukherjee : 1977).

As indicated earlier, measurement of the change has turned out to be highly coloured exercise in which the approach and methodology could contrive to give different qualitative and quantitative profiles of the same phenomenon. Measurement

of informal leadership in the villages, for example, following the methodologies of Rogers (1962) and Dahl (1961) yielded one profile of their background and characteristics (Sen : 1971) : quite a different picture emerged when one used a different methodology (Arora : 1970; Verma : 1971a, 1972, b, 1974).5/

An important dimension here was the measurement of different components of change dealing with information - acquisition, attitude reinforcement/modification, and behaviour modification. However, measurement exercises of this nature involving the information-decision-action schema in the field, for example, of agriculture, health and family planning in rural India have been vitiated by the cultural bias of the measurement scales. Most of the scales measure Indian empirical reality through the Western criteria, their local validation notwithstanding. In cases where this has been a cross-cultural exercise (Roy, et al : 1968, 1969; Feliegel, et al : 1969; Inkeles and Smith : 1974), the treatment of normative position in the West as the empirical reality and its comparison with the Indian situation adds one more category of bias and untruth.6/

Nature and linearity of change has generally been measured by identifying processes triggering change. Currently identified major processes of change include the following:7/

1. Traditionalization (Sanskritization, cultural renaissance, etc.)
2. Modernization (Westernization, secularization, etc.)
3. Urbanization
4. Industrialization
5. Cultural drift

Identification of these processes has been made on the basis of (a) identity of change inducing mechanisms (individual, group, institution); (b) linearity of change (judged on the basis of role-model values); (c) aspect/sector of change (social relations, modes of production, politics, religion and culture); and (d) unit(s) affected by such change (individuals, corporate groups, institutions, culture, social structure). The presence and operation of these processes is not questioned : what certainly is their exaggerated claims to explain causation, sources, direction and independence of change inducing stimuli (Ishwaran : 1970; Parvathamma : 1978). There is also a tendency to view the operation of

change inducing stimuli, internal and external, some how operating in isolation with each other. It is true that these stimuli are activised by different sources but at the response level it is the same set of village inhabitants which reacts to them. To that extent the strategies of planned change constantly interact with the strategies of spontaneous change, articulated, and operated on their own by the rural population. In the initiation of change or even in tis absence the two strategies affect each other. This being so, it is fallacious to attribute the observed change in villages to only one of the two sets which is what most analyses do. Of course, one could justifiably identify the degrees of influence exercised by various factors as the motivating forces.

Almost every study of social change ultimately touches, directly or indirectly, the issues of quantum and adequacy of change registered generally and in specific areas. This has been accomplished in two ways : one, where the quantum of change is described only via the qualitative labels i.e. high, moderate, low or appreciable, small, negligible etc. Most anthropological accounts belong to this category.8/ On the other hand, there are others who use scales to measure change quantitatively (Sen and Roy : 1966; Sen, et al : 1967; Fliegel, et al : 1969; Roy, et al : 1968, 1969; Kivlin, et al : 1968).

The issue of adequacy of social change in rural India is concerned with the relationship of occurance of quantum of change with the expected order of change. We have already noted that there is hardly any agreement among social scientists about the quantum of change registered : the expected order of change is even more controversial area since the perceptions of different scholars about the need of such change have varied a great deal depending upon their ideological orientations and methodological approaches. In general, scholars seem to be highly dissatisfied with the adequacy of change registered in social, cultural,9/ and administrative 10/ areas. Changes in agriculture and allied fields of production have been considered significant though only in specific geographical areas and in specific components.11/ The impression which one gathers from these accounts is that although the quantum of change has not been adequate in many areas it is probably proceeding in the right direction.12/ It is this assumption which is crux of the problem : for, it is open to question whether the direction of change in rural India is right after all. This becomes all the more

obvious when the issue of direction and adequacy of change is linked to various segments of the rural society. It requires not much of scholarly acumen to realize that the exploited segments have not very much benefitted from the change programmes operated during the last thirty two years. For them direction of change has been far from right and most certainly not appropriate. It is also open to doubt whether a larger number of "changes" are really changing the basic content of relationships.

Causation of Change : Real and Contrived Motivators

Gandhi was one charismatic leader who attempted to build the myth of Indian villages being republics, self-sustaining in their functioning and virtually independent of other settlements in their existence. Despite nostalgia and romanticism, this view was hardly correct historically : in day to day operations it was down-right impractical. It was true, of course, that many a village was isolated : however, there were in and outflows, human, material and cultural, which affected the life and system of production even in these isolated villages very vitally. Even if there was not much migration from these villages to outside places, outsiders (i.e. from the government officials to the traders, travelling sages and even beggers) penetrated the village social existence quite often. Changes in the villages were, therefore, caused by both the external and internal stimuli.

It is certainly true that the outside penetration in the villages, milder as it was during pre-Moghul period, increased considerably thereafter. However, a gleaning of historical accounts indicates that this increased penetration brought about changes of various types, dimensions and quantity because of the interaction of the external stimuli with the internal response pattern (Sharma and Jha : 1974). Weberian/neo-Weberian groups of scholars have, however, clearly stretched their arguments a bit too far when they state that basic changes in the micro- and macro structures of Indian society started taking place only after it came into contact with the West, that most structural changes during the pre-contact (with West) phase of Indian history used to be of an oscillatory rather than evolutionary pattern (Yogendra Singh : 1973 : 27). There is a clear over-emphasis on the change inducing capacity of the external stimuli (especially originating in the West) and a biased under-estimation of the indegenous nature of Indian response in these auguments. These analyses, therefore, discover generally adaptation and imitation (Singer : 1961, 1966, 1966a, 1972; Elder : 1959, 1966; Kapp : 1963; Morris :

1967; Cohen : 1973; Kunkel : 1971; Dumont : 1970; Rudolphs : 1967; Mandelbaum : 1970; Frank : 1969; Gould : 1969 among Western scholars and A.K. Singh : 1967; Pandya : 1970; Khare : 1971; Tripathi : 1970; Shah and Rao : 1965; Misra : 1962; Dube : 1965; Loomis and Loomis symposium : 1966; Rao : 1969; Saksena : 1971, 1972; Sen : 1973; Yogendra Singh : 1973 among the Indians) : assimilation, adoption of new functions by the socalled traditional institutions and stoppage of a few old ones, and change in the structure of the society do not generally get adequate coverage.

The tradition of research in diffusion of innovations in the West and its subsequent extension in India brought in its train several assumptions in operation. Some of these were : the change stimuli should be channelized in the vilages via leadership, external and internal (Coughner : 1965; Emery and Oser : 1958; Ensminger : 1972; Mayer, et al : 1959; D. Sinha : 1969; Taylor, et al : 1965); that mass media would play a revolutionary role in bringing rural change (Deutsch : 1953; Lazarsfeld, et al : 1955; Lerner and Schramm : 1967; Kivlin, et al : 1968; Pye : 1963; Rogers : 1962; Roy, et al : 1968, 1969; Schramm : 1955, 1964); that direct mass media exposure of the rural leaders, constituting the primary audience, helped message spread to the secondary audience (Lazarsfeld, et al : 1955; Rogers : 1962; Rogers and Shoemaker : 1971); that there was no personal influence involved in the transmission of the message at the first stage from media to the leaders - (Lazarsfeld, et al : 1955; Rogers : 1962); that the knowledge gap of the village population could be bridged with the help of mass media (Hornik : 1975; Hornik, et al : 1973; Rogers : 1974; Shingi and Modi : 1976; Shingi : 1979; Techner, et al : 1970, 1973) and that the task delivery systems in various fields/administration catering the rural /of population would act as change agents (Broehl : 1978; Dey : 1952, 1969; Mayer, et al : 1959; Sen : 1969; Sen and Roy : 1966; Verma : 1972, a, b, 1974, 1976, a). These generally originated from the West, especially the United States directly or U.N. agencies such as the UNESCO, WHO, FAO, the IBRD and the like dominated by the Western thought process and ideology. Using these assumptions, a succession of programmes of directed social change were launched in rural India with large scale 'assistance' also flowing in from the same direction. It started with the generalized programme of rural development, the community development programme. Intensive area (IADP, Command Area, DPAP), function (Nutrition, Cattle Development) and target-group based (SFDA, MFAL) programmes followed. Radio, first and television later were

used to prop up the communication of these programmes, through the development bureaucracy, to the people (Kivlin and Roy : 1968; Mathur and Neurath : 1959; Neurath : 1960, 1962; Menefee and Menefee : 1963; Roy, et al : 1969; Shingi and Modi : 1975 : [illegible] Thakur, et al : 1962-63, a; Verma : 1968, 1969a, 1970, 1971, a, b).13/

In the operation of these programmes, many of these assumptions proved wrong, and inappropriate. Almost every one discovered that leadership of the villages was helpful for inducing change only to the extent it was altruistic in its orientation. It emerged that in programme implementation the concerned administrative machinery had to go beyond the leader-follower dichotomy (Verma : 1971a, 1972b); that there was personal influence involved even in the first step of message transfer (Emery and Oeser : 1958; Heredero : 1977; Mathai : 1977; McLuhan : 1967; Mills and Arorson : 1965; Y.V.L. Rao : 1968; Sargent : 1965; Verma : 1972b); that the mass media instead of reducing the knowledge gap of the ignorant sections of the village population actually increased the same because of their initial lag (ceiling effect) and current inadequate access and exposure to the media (Shingi and Modi : 1976; Shingi : 1979; Verma : 1969a, 1970, 1971); that there was very little participation of the people themselves in the programme planning and implementation (COPP : 1957; Gaikwad : 1969, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1978, a; Gaikwad and Verma : 1968; Mathai : 1977); that quite often the officials incharge of introducing change themselves acted to be greatest single obstacles (Mathai : 1977; Srinivas : 1979; Wiser and Wiser : 1958); that the use of task delivery systems to their maximum capacity depended upon the organised status of its users (Moulik : 1978, 1979; Putton : 1979; Hebsur : 1979; Verma : 1971); and that in the design of the change programmes sub-cultural perspectives and variations were essential to make them appropriate and effective (Ishwaran : 1970).

Periodical correctives followed in the form of one-shot participatory institutions (Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives, Farmers' Service Societies) and newer programmes (growth centres and integrated rural development, Mandi development, block level planning) from time to time. In accepting and introducing many of these programmes, the initiative quite often came from the Western scholars, agencies, and governments. In a few cases there was marked divergence in their real and stated objectives.14/ In this divergence, lies buried the real story of articulation of the needs of the people, vehicles and routes for their realization and interplay of the capitalist and non-capitalist ideologies. It is

only now that the value premises of some of these programmes are being increasingly questioned even in India : they have already been flogged in the West.

During the same thirty two year period, another crop of experimental rural development programmes has been under testing by individuals, and institutions. Some of these deal with issues such as exploitation, hedgemony, and sub-cultural variations of poverty and the solutions attempted vary from integrated cooperativization of production and marketing of an item (Anand Milk model, now being extended to cover oil seeds in Gujarat), to organization of the exploited communities (Raigars of Jawaja : Ravi Mathai : 1977 : Harijans of Sangli : Arun Chavan), and organisation of a community around a mode of production but for all round improvement of quality of rural life (Mahatma Gandhi Cooperative Lift Irrigation Society of Dr. Gopal Reddy in Nalgonda). These experiments have profound policy implications for rural reconstruction and yet the social scientists in their change analyses and the policy planners in their choice of new programmes, continue to ignore them.

Methodology : Scientific Pretensions and Practiced Imperfections

The foregoing discussion has in ways more than one reflected on the methodologies used by the studies of social change. However, the ensuing comments would cover aspects which are generally included under the rubric of "mechanics" of research :

a) Barring a few studies (Panchanadikar and Panchanadikar : 1970; Sen and Roy : 1966; Sen, et al : 1967; Fliegel, et al : 1968; Hiramani : 1977; Oomen : 1972; Punit : 1977; Roy, et al : 1968, 1969; Kivlin, et al : 1969; Rao and Verma : 1969; K.L. Sharma : 1974; Sinha : 1969; Verma : 1970, 1971, a, b, 1972, a, b, 1974, a), the geographical coverage and numerical data base of most other studies is indeed very meagre. And yet, social scientists have proceeded to make sweeping generalizations about the society, cultural traditions, religions, communities, and castes etc. It is not that these scholars are not aware of the complexity, diversity and variability of the empirical situation in different parts of the nation : for, they seldom fail to emphasize the same in their own descriptions. This general disregard for quantitative support, representative nature of sample and statistical validation of the hypotheses needed for definitive conclusions is to be traced to the naive belief that quality and quantity are two water-tight compartments in research, that in order to get

quality in one's analysis one has to discard usage of figures and numericals; that no qualitatively penetrative analysis could be made using large quantitative base. Whereas it is true that quite a few quantitative studies fail to attain high analytical standards, it has been demonstrated by many that this can be done (Arora and Lasswell : 1968; Arora : 1969; Kessinger : 1976; Gaikwad : 1971, 1977; Gaikwad and Verma : 1968; Gaikwad, et al : 1977; Lakshman Rao : 1968; Rao and Verma : 1969; Verma : 1970, 1971a).

b) In view of peculiar development of comity of social sciences in India, two tendencies have been witnessed : (i) an indegenous, Indian tradition of interpreting empirical situations has, barring a few stray cases (Gupta : 1974; Saran : 1959, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1969, a, b, 1971; Verma : 1970, 1971a, 1972, 1974), failed to develop; (ii) imported theoretical frameworks (i.e. Weberian, neo-Weberian), ethnocentrism and Brahminical views have coloured the interpretations of the field data. It is because of these tendencies that Mandelbaum (1970), despite an enormous review of village studies, fails to correctly analyse structural change; that Milton Singer (1973), despite his knowledge of and respect for Hindu religion, discovers compartmentalization between family and work organisations; that Dube (1977), despite his ability to present qualitatively impressive analysis of data, fails to give a factually correct social report of post-independence changes; that Srinivas (1952, 1960, 1962, 1965, 1976), despite his acknowledged capacity of perception and abstraction, tends to over-emphasize the status emulation process (in-appropriately called Sanskritization) on the part of the lower castes; and that Yogendra Singh (1973) conveniently glosses over the contribution of indegenous processes responsible for modernization in the Indian society. Nor have those, whose credentials in dealing with quantitative aspects are impeccable, done any better on these counts. Thus, to give but one example, non-acceptance of "new" agricultural and other innovations by the villagers is seen by them as lack of innovativeness, their (villagers') sound reasons for not doing so notwithstanding (Fliegel, et al : 1969; Roy, et al : 1968, 1969; Kivlin, et al : 1969).

c) Absence of time-orientation and ahistoricism have contributed to equation of normative position with empirical reality and reconstruction of historical patterns of change on the basis of temporal evidence in majority of studies. The anthropological accounts generally proceed <u>how</u>, for example, a marriage ceremony takes place in a particular

community at a particular place : it is very rare to find them also providing accounts of how many follow that ceremony and what changes have taken place in it, when, and why. There is the magnum opus of Mandelbaum (1970) where he tries to reconstruct historical patterns of change at the societal level by referring and reviewing temporal village studies of a large number of scholars from different parts of the country. He even goes to the extent of including a map wherein the geographical location of the village studies is indicated. The map, reduced on scale as it is, gives a misleading impression of the representative nature of the village studies reviewed. Several facts are glossed over : (a) cited village studies do not provide a representative sample; (b) they were not part of one exercise undertaken with one framework; (c) they were conducted by different scholars at different points in history; (d) response pattern of the respondents could be different in different contexts. In Dube's (1977) compendium, what various contributors have attempted to achieve is to record their own impressions about various sectors : Dube himself had taken the onerous task of offering generalized conclusions. It is very easy to conclude that X, Y, Z, has been observed and A, B, C, has not especially if one is also not required to present historical evidence. Yogendra Singh (1973) has re-interpreted and "put in a systemic frame" the interpretations of others in the Weberian framework. In this framework, anything indegenous has no claims for bringing structural change : it has been booked in advance for Western stimuli. System in his analysis - and that of many of his ilk - means only the Weberian/Parsonian conceptualization of a social system : delineation of systems in the Marxian and other frameworks have no place in it. The Western stimuli has, according to him, produced modernization in the Indian society : it is quite another thing, that the historical evidence and historians are against this viewpoint. In general, it is very rarely that social scientists have combined the talents and methodologies of a historian and a social scientist (Ishwaran : 1970; Kessinger : 1974; Berreman : 1970; Newell : 1970; Saberwal : 1976) to provide analysis of change with time-place and cause-effect-consequences specificity.

d) A crucial issue in any study is the unit and level of analysis. The unit of analysis could be an individual, a group, an institution and a system : this analysis could be at macro, messo and micro levels. Although most studies of social change in rural India are quite definite about their unit of analysis, the same is not the case with the concept of levels about which considerable confusion exists. This

confusion is not about what constitutes a macro, messo or micro level : it lies in the manner in which the level itself is sought to be studied. The depiction of the macro, messo and the micro is varied. The macro, as reconstructed by Mandelbaum (1970), is by piecing together of isolated and different points in history studies of a large number of scholars. One might like to ask : do they add up to make a macro picture? This is one end of the spectrum. Ranged at the other end are Singer (1972, 1973) and Srinivas (1952, 1962, 1965, 1976) where the macro has been a blown up form of a micro area study. There are others who are located in the Indological stream and who have created the macro picture from the scriptures. There is very little doubt that none of these streams gives the complete and real profile of the macro.

The micro profile has been presented by either considering the elements first and sketching their inter-relationships thereafter or depicting only the abstract/whole entity of the unit of analysis (i.e. a village). Only in very few of these the penetrations of external stimuli into them and their own extensions beyond their geographical boundries have been recorded. The significance of the internal and the external forces has, thus, not been properly indicated.

The messo as a level has assumed significance only after a realization dawned that the micro had limited use for generalization and prescription and the macro was quite often beyond one's capacity to study. The messo, essentially based in the sub-cultural perspective and providing enough elbow room for methodological details and policy applications, met the requirements. In marked contrast to the mircro studies, the messo ones take a more comprehensive view of the working of the elements and processes of the system.

e) Before the Indian agencies (RPC, ICSSR, ICAR, ICHR, ICCR, etc.) started large scale funding of research studies, Indian villages and institutions were studied more by foreigners with the help of foreign funds. Their interest had periodic preferences and the Indians latched on to these 'leads'. Till very recently, these periodic interests swamped the research choices of many Indian institutions and scholars.15/ As a result, some areas were over-researched in a particular manner (i.e. caste, family, diffusion of agricultural innovations) : there was inadequate coverage of certain other issues, phenomena which had crucial significance for the Indian people, their government and the society.16/ Analyses of social change in rural India for the purposes of policy analysis and planning have begun only in the late seventies

and their conceptualization, execution, and use very much remains open to conjecture even today.

Contribution of Research : Descriptive Adequacy and Prescriptive Appropriateness

We finally come to the uses and abuses of the studies of social change. Before touching their descriptive adequacy and prescriptive appropriateness, some related and, in our opinion, very consequential questions much be posed. These questions are : (i) what is the background (socio-economic-cultural) of researchers who have conducted studies in rural India? (ii) What specific areas have they studied and with what numerical vigour? (iii) What were - and are - the motivations in conducting the studies?

i) It is rather an interesting fact that no quantitative account is available which gives a break of number of studies on social change in rural India conducted by the British, American, European, Asian, Indian researchers : for, if one such record were available, it would make the following impressions assume a lot more credibility and force : (a) of the total number of studies on social change in rural India, a majority has been accomplished not by Indians but the foreigners;17/ (b) among the foreigners, the number of those following only one particular ideology (i.e. capitalist) has been overwhelming; (c) among the Indians, a majority had very narrow social experience (Saberwal : 1979) and in particular the poor and the exploited have generally not been involved (Joshi : 1979).18/

ii) Recent reviews of researches (i.e. ICSSR Surveys) make atleast one trend very clear : certain areas have been showered special interest and attention whereas some have been comparatively ignored. For instance, even though inequality and poverty have been major issues to be tackled through the programmes of planned change in rural India, non-capitalist perspectives on them have been lacking. It is true that there are some lyrical and penetrative analyses of kinship, family, caste and religion. One would not be justified in saying that they are not insightful. However, it is a moot point whether these analyses should have been given preferences over the ones dealing with poverty, exploitation, inequality, social relations at work place and the like. As we shall see a trifle later, this has been a major contributory factor for absence of development orientation in the analyses of social change : for, when the process of underdevelopment was not adequately analysed, how one could provide an in-

sightful perspective on the parallel and inter-dependent process of development?

iii) There are two much talked about motivations for individual and institutionalised researches : to increase theoretical and empirical knowledge and to help the agencies in the planning, administration, appraisal and correction of planned programmes of change. Actually, however, in persuing these two objectives, a third motivation assumes dominance. This motive has something to do with hedgemony, and exploitation with the help of expertise and scholarly work. At the back of many inspired and institutionalized research efforts has been the desire to acquire knowledge which had other uses for the sponsoring countries19/ and promotion of a certain technological solution for which the inputs may have to come from the same direction.20/ It was possible to arrive at certain types of conclusions and recommendations because, as pointed earlier, certain approaches and methodologies, essentially based in Western values, were used to analyse Indian empirical realities.

What, then, is the descriptive adequacy of analyses of social change in rural India? Without going in for a case by case verdict, we attempt here what could possibly be termed as a generalized assessment. In its totality, the coverage of these studies on the historical, geographical and topical dimensions is highly inadequate : it is also not impartial quite often. Even on topics on which the number of studies has been quite impressive, the analysis does not uncover the mystique of the phenomenon because of slanted methodology and approach. Excepting a very limited number of studies, most others lack what Srinivas has belatedly called 'development orientation'. They certainly reflect elitist views and have imbibed very little of peoples' own perception of their problems (Srinivas : 1979).

To judge prescriptive appropriateness of the conclusions and recommendations of the studies, it is essential to refer to some of the historical cases. The decision to launch the generalized programme of community development based on the harmony model was made as a result of, among other things, recommendations of a number of studies (i.e. Taylor, et al : 1967). The programme itself professed to develop the community but in its approach and implementation the targets were atomized individuals; village leadership was used to channelize the programme. By 1959 its inappropriateness had dawned upon everyone. Whereas the proponenets of peoples' participation brought in the cooperatives and Panchayati Raj,

which later became legitimisers for the vested interest, supporters of specialized (area, function, target group) programmes had pushed in programmes such as IADP, HYV, CAD, DPAP, ICDP, IRD, SFDA, MFAL, FSS, etc. Each of these programmes was preceded by a study/or a number of studies which recommended the course of action. It is now conceded that the IADP, for example, increased disparities and increased the dependence of the farmers on the non-agricultural sector (especially the industrial sector). The mere increase in per unit production did not bring prosperity to the majority of farmers since per unit cost had also increased. What is more striking is the fact that whereas the farmer could not exercise any control over price fixation of his output, the prices of the agricultural inputs coming into agricultural sector from the industrial sector were revisable at the whims and fancies of the manufactures and traders. Similarly, a whole new generation of institutions such as the FSS, rural banks, etc. has emerged under the weight of expert opinion and yet the 'change agents' have not changed the structure and content of generalized and specific target group based exploitations and povery.

Studies recommended that radio, and television (terrestrial/ satelite based) would bring information and knowledge to the ignorant and needy. However, knowledge gap between the rich and the poor has not been bridged and the media, brought in the name of information transmission for the poor, have become means of prestige and entertainment of the elite. Ever increasing outlays are being made available for various sectoral programmes in meeting the recommendations of 'social indicators', and 'per capita expenditure' studies and yet, the horizontal spread of facilities has not improved quality of life of the rural population to any appreciable degree.

A new generation, born after independence, has graduated to adulthood phase and watched with amazing helplessness the emergence of unplanned change as a result of planned programmes. This generation - and the one that has followed it - does not have the same level of tolerance as its predecessor. It has seen emergence of the new breed of 'bura sahibs', leaders, and contractors pocket the major portions of the development outlays via various channels of leakages. It is somewhat more external-oriented and certainly better informed. Despite all its efforts at social mobility (Saberwal : 1976; K.N. Sharma : 1961), there are clearly outlined and felt limits on its success. As frustration has set in, some among this segment have taken to short-cuts in obtaining material means to lead the kind of life styles which they consider absolutely essential for themselves. Tension, violence and crime, which have been exploited to the hilt by the "modern-day" unscrupulous

leadership, has erupted with surprising velocity, force, and serious consequences. While the politicians have played a leading part in this emergent schema, the researchers can not avoid blame for their failure to provide insightful diagnostic and objectively prescriptive studies of these phenomena. A new generation of scholars must make amends now.

Notes

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1 Among these were : Tagore's Sriniketan (Dasgupta : 1962), Hatch's Martandam (Hatch : 1949, a), ... Krishnamachari's Baroda (Krishnamachari : 1962), Bryne's Gurgaon (Bryne : 1946, 1950), Gandhi's Wardha and Sabarmati (Kavoori and Singh : 1967).

2 This review is not a census of all the studies of socio-economic change in rural India. On the contrary, it is selective and concentrates on the major ones among them.

3 Clearly, this is an illustrative listing and with little effort it should be possible to swell its numerical strength to impressive levels.

4 Definitions of development, underdevelopment, and modernization as given by Furtado (1971), Stewart (1977), and Frank (1967, 1969, 1975) are, for instance, drastically different than the ones outlined by the scholars following Weber. For incisive comments on the latter, see for example, Arora (1968, 1969, 1976), Desai (1975) and Gould (1969).

5 This is equally valid for analyses of informal leadership of industrial/urban societies. Dahl (1971) on the one hand and Domhoff (1978) on the other, for example, depict different profiles of the civic leadership of New Haven.

6 Beteille (1969) and Berreman (1978), for example, point out the inherent flaws in the analyses of institutionalized forms of inequality in India and Western societies. While every one ends up in denouncing Indian caste system (which

should be condemned no doubt), the institutionalized inequality practiced in Western societies on the basis of colour and race is conveniently glossed over.

7 Berreman (1970), Ishwaran (1970), P.N. Mukherjee (1977) and Yogendra Singh (1973) provide an interesting discussion on these.

8 Haldipur (1974) and Mandelbaum (1970) provide a good listing of these studies.

9 See, for example, Dube (1977), Mandelbaum (1970), Singer (1973) and Yogendra Singh (1973).

10 For useful discussions, one could refer to Gaikwad (1969, 1970, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1978) and Kothari (1971).

11 An interesting assessment may be had from Swaminathan (1978), where he compares "our" and "their" agriculture. "Our" farming is based on smaller farms being cultivated either by the same or larger number of people utilizing renewable resources like animal dung (manure) and firewood. "Their" farming has larger farms being managed by fewer and fewer people, the farming system being heavily dependent on non-renewable resources like petroleum products (oil, gas, napatha) and coal which also pollute the environment.

12 One may not have any quarrel with the assessment of direction of change such as the one arrived at by Madan (1973, 1977) wherein he finds villages shrinking (extension beyond villages, increasing dependency on outside systems, increased penetration of outside agencies, networks etc.) and growing individualism.

13 To that may be added the SITE studies of the Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad, which are in various stages of publication.

14 To cite but one example. Much against the run of the mill objectives of the community development programme in India listed by many scholars (Dayal : 1960; Dey : 1962, 1969; Ensminger : 1972; Jain : 1967; Kavoori and Singh : 1967; Krishnamachari : 1962), the dominant objective in introducing it was to contain spread of communism. Chester Bowles (1954), who brought along the massive U.S. assistance for this programme, admits it much without fuss. It was also precisely for this reason that

the Etawah model was preferred over the Nilokheri one since the latter involved organization of the production and marketing systems of the beneficiaries, a mechanism which reduced possibilities of exploitation by the vested interests.

15 For a detailed analysis of the phenomenon and its consequences, see, for instance, Verma (1967, 1969, 1974a).

16 For example, the withering of the village as a community, loosening of family authority, gradual brutalization of not so brutal wings of bureacuracy, emergence of dual society, despondency, defiance, violence and crime are some of the vital issues on which not many researches have been conducted. Peasant struggles are now being studies and as yet no analysis has been made of the resettlement of the villages for military purposes among the border nationalities (the Nagas, Mizos, etc.).

17 This would be so inspite of the fact that there was some restriction on the impunity with which the foreigners, especially those from the elitist institutions, could conduct research in India after 1974.

18 It would be useful to categorize the Indians into (a) those who are essentially based in India and (b) those who continue to be Indian for the sake of records and convenience. Another revealing question to ask would be : why the Indian students and scholars in foreign universities some how end up in studying only Indian research problems? Why, in other words, the western societies are not all that open to researchers from non-western scholars despite their advertized "openness"?

19 It is now revealed that the studies on virus and bacteria in India had uses in bacterial warfare.

20 The communication studies dealing with the radio first, television slightly later and satelite fairly recently aimed, among other things, indirect sales promotion of these technologies for use in India. In fact, as many a study on transfer of technology indicate, the imported technology was quite often obsolete, apart from being highly expensive.

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